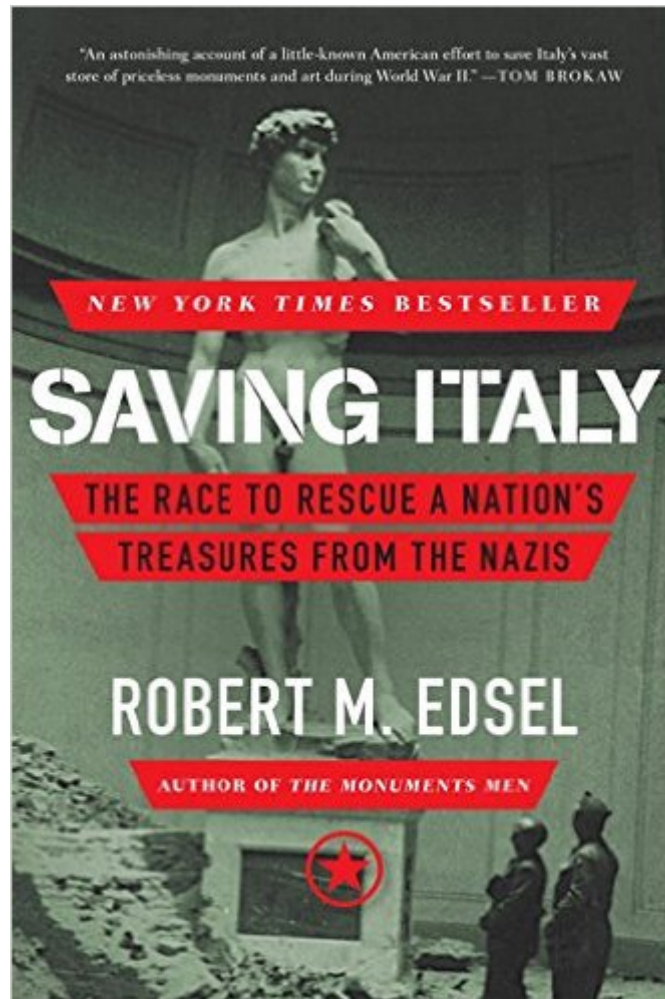


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# Saving Italy: The Race To Rescue A Nation's Treasures From The Nazis



## Synopsis

From the author of the #1 New York Times bestseller *The Monuments Men* "An astonishing account of a little-known American effort to save Italy's art during World War II." —Tom Brokaw

When Hitler's armies occupied Italy in 1943, they also seized control of mankind's greatest cultural treasures. As they had done throughout Europe, the Nazis could now plunder the masterpieces of the Renaissance, the treasures of the Vatican, and the antiquities of the Roman Empire. On the eve of the Allied invasion, General Dwight Eisenhower empowered a new kind of soldier to protect these historic riches. In May 1944 two unlikely American heroes—artist Deane Keller and scholar Fred Hartt—embarked from Naples on the treasure hunt of a lifetime, tracking billions of dollars of missing art, including works by Michelangelo, Donatello, Titian, Caravaggio, and Botticelli. With the German army retreating up the Italian peninsula, orders came from the highest levels of the Nazi government to transport truckloads of art north across the border into the Reich. Standing in the way was General Karl Wolff, a top-level Nazi officer. As German forces blew up the magnificent bridges of Florence, General Wolff commandeered the great collections of the Uffizi Gallery and Pitti Palace, later risking his life to negotiate a secret Nazi surrender with American spymaster Allen Dulles. Brilliantly researched and vividly written, the New York Times bestselling *Saving Italy* brings readers from Milan and the near destruction of *The Last Supper* to the inner sanctum of the Vatican and behind closed doors with the preeminent Allied and Axis leaders: Roosevelt, Eisenhower, and Churchill; Hitler, Göring, and Himmler. An unforgettable story of epic thievery and political intrigue, *Saving Italy* is a testament to heroism on behalf of art, culture, and history. 61 illustrations; 3 maps

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

What an adventure I just returned from. Saving Italy puts you right back into the Italy of WWII and the threat war meant to the art and monuments of the country. Written from the perspective of the Monuments Men, the Allied art historians who volunteered for service to help saving and protecting whatever they could, as they joined the armies on their way up the Italian peninsula., this book is full of fascinating first hand experiences, combined with historical facts about places and Italian, German and Allied characters involved in the protection (or not) of the cultural heritage of this treasure trove of a country. And on top of that, Robert Edsel compellingly tells the story of how the war in Italy was brought to an early end through secret negotiations between the US Secret Services (OSS) and an SS-General who was in charge of some of the most important works of art Italy owns, the treasures from the Uffizi in Florence. What their fate was, and how Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper" in Milan made it through - barely so - you might want to read yourself. Absolutely fascinating! Ollie Hill

I couldn't put it down! Saving Italy is a page turner with a compelling narrative that often keeps you on the edge-of-your-seat with suspense. The drawings that Monuments Man Deane Keller sent home to his young son offer a revealing insight into the man's mixed emotions about his eagerness to help save the treasures of a country he loved in the midst of war, coupled with the loneliness and isolation he felt being separated from the family he adored. The passion and impulsiveness of Monuments Man Fred Hartt help the thrilling adventure of Saving Italy come alive. Edsel does a great job bringing out the very human side of his complex characters, including a little known Nazi General, Karl Wolff. The book is well-researched with many author interviews noted, but is presented in a way that reads more like an espionage novel. I highly recommend Saving Italy not just to those who love art or WWII History, but to anyone looking for an inspiring story about the human spirit and the sacrifices people make to follow their passion, risking their lives for a cause greater than themselves. Five stars doesn't seem like enough!

This is an amazing story about a part of WWII history that I was not familiar with. The author did a great job researching and writing this compelling narrative about a "new kind of soldier" empowered to protect rather than destroy. I have read many books about the war but can't remember one that included so many rich details. The characters practically leap off the page. The story is fast-paced, reading more like fiction. As a reader I felt like I was almost part of the adventure. One of the most interesting plots in Saving Italy involves a secret Nazi surrender of Italy in which the art work is held

hostage while an SS General negotiates with American spies. I was surprised and riveted by these details. Overall, this is an exciting read and I would highly recommend it. (And I can't wait to see the Clooney movie based on the author's last book, *The Monuments Men*.)

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What an amazing story! My father lived in Italy during WWII and I never spoke with him when he was alive about how it was in Italy during the war. Many cities experienced much destruction, including Naples, Milan, Florence and Monte Cassino. In 1980 I saw DaVinci's fresco *The Last Supper* and there were photos of the destruction of the church where the fresco was. Did not dawn on me that it was allied bombs which blew up the church but the bombing was of the train yards right near the church. Even in a brutal war men realized the importance of these masterpieces, men on both sides of the war. The story that is told is incredible and I am surprised it took this long to get this story out there. I see where a movie is being made on this subject and will be released in December. Interwoven in the story is the German surrender in Italy and how complicated it was, the Germans just could not surrender that easy. Also did not know all the bridges in Florence were blown up by the Germans (rebuilt after the war) except for the Ponte Vecchio (which Hitler loved that bridge). The bombing of the abbey in Monte Cassino, allied forces had no choice but to bomb it. All the men searching for these masterpieces, college professors, museum curators, what a story. Thank you Robert Edsel for writing this story.

Robert Edsel's book is a completely wasted opportunity. I read "The Monuments Men" and generally enjoyed that book, perhaps because he had another writer working with him. This follow-up, which tells the story of the Monuments Men in Italy, is painstakingly researched but it is dry, boring, and doesn't focus enough on Deane Keller and Fred Hartt. I thought I would learn much more from reading this book, but he didn't add too much. If you're looking for a book to read about the fate of Italy's art during World War II, read Lynn Nicholas' definitive "The Rape of Europa." It has an excellent section on Italy and puts this story into context.

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